

# HOW TO... Secure your PC

Make sure you've taken the basic steps needed to secure your PC by using the settings and features within Windows. Lynley Oram explains how you can play it safe

**B**eing connected to the internet can make your computer vulnerable to online thieves. There's nothing you can do to ensure that no-one will ever be able to break into your PC and steal your data. But there are some basic steps you can take to make sure you're not an easy target. Here, we'll explain what you should do if you're using Windows Vista, Windows XP and Internet Explorer 7.

**1** Open the Control Panel and click on Security Center. The first section deals with the firewall. You may prefer to use your own firewall program rather than the one built into Windows. Many third-party programs can be detected by Windows and, if yours is one of them, Windows will let you know if the firewall is switched on. If you don't have a third-party firewall program, and this section is set to Off, you must turn on the Windows Firewall. Click on this option in Vista. In Windows XP, click on the Windows Firewall link under Manage Security Settings at the bottom of the window.

**2** Microsoft frequently releases updates for Windows and many of these relate to security issues. To keep your PC safe, you need to download and install these updates regularly. If you have Automatic Updates set to On, Windows downloads and installs these updates for you. However, you might prefer to be notified when updates are available and choose when

to download and install them yourself. Choose this option on the Automatic Updates settings page. Windows will keep an eye on your anti-virus protection, letting you know if you have any protection installed, and how up to date it is.

**3** You don't have to keep checking the Security Center to make sure your PC is safe. If Windows spots any problems in the security area, it displays a warning message, along with an icon of a shield with a red cross in the Notification Area of the taskbar.

Automatic Updates downloads and installs only the most important updates. There may be other amendments to Windows available that could prove useful. To download all the updates available, open the Automatic Updates dialog box again and click on the Windows Update Web Site link. Click on the Custom button in the webpage that opens.

**4** Make sure that the security settings in Internet Explorer are also set correctly. Select Internet Options from the Tools menu and click on the Security tab. Check that Internet is selected under Zones and adjust the slider under Security Level. This should be on a medium or high setting. Add sites that you know are safe, and that start with https rather than http, to the Trusted Sites zone. Once this is done, you can lower the site's security level. **ES**

## HOW TO... Avoid website registration

Fed up of websites that force you to register just to view a story or webpage? Although registering is usually free and takes only a few minutes to complete, it is still irritating, especially if it is for a website you'll hardly ever visit. The chances are you'll forget your login details and then need to register again the next time you visit. The BugMeNot website ([www.bugmenot.com](http://www.bugmenot.com)) aims to help with this problem.

This website provides you with a username and password for most sites. Just input the web address for the site you want to access that requires registration. You'll get a usable login name and password. Other users will have already registered with most sites using fake details and disposable email addresses for activation, and passed those login details on to BugMeNot.



## HOW TO... Disable recent Word features

Many people use WordPad, the free word-processing program derived from Word 6 and included with Windows. If you use Word and share documents with people using WordPad, you need to make your files compatible. To do this, start Word and open a document. Go to the Tools menu and select Options. Click on the Save tab to bring it to the front. Tick the 'Disable features introduced after' option. A drop-down menu appears. Select the version of Word you want. Now, when you save a document, Word displays a list of features that it converts so the document can be used in earlier versions.

